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THE ASCENDING LIFE

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Books by
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The Untried Door
What's Best Worth Saying
The Unfinished Program of Democracy
The High Road to Christ
Jesus Son of Man
Renaissance of Faith
The Church in the Commonwealth
That One Faith
On to the City of God

***T**HIS book consists of a series of five addresses delivered at the National Convention of the Young Womens Christian Associations of the United States of America in May, 1924. They represent an attempt to discover the secret of more life and fuller from a study of the last stage of the public ministry of Jesus and its sequel.*

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I

THE MOUNT

I

THE MOUNT

WE read the story of the Transfiguration with less scepticism today than we should have done a generation ago. We are recovering humility and the gift of wonder in the face of life; and we are daily finding that there are more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in our cocksure little philosophies. In those days, we were all rationalists more or less, and though we could not always give the thing a name, it was there, hiding in odd corners of our minds and posing all sorts of cunning and troublesome questions about the things which we most surely believed. I am speaking, of course, of thinking folk: for there are always people whose minds are idle and remain unaffected by anything that is going on in the world; and there are those, too, whose thought is not able or not allowed to pierce a steel-clad integument of credalism. These people were happy enough; but the rest of us were not quite happy; our house of life did not seem to be altogether safe. We see now, however, that rationalism was a phase of discipline by which faith was to be purged of credulity, and religion,

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like everything else, had to come to terms with the scientific method. And it is the scientific method itself which has made rationalism impossible; for it has brought us to a point beyond which reason is unable to carry us, but at which we cannot stop.

The rationalist's world was a very humdrum place. It was a world in which nothing was credible or possible which lay outside the range of our common experience. We had our senses; we had our reasoning faculties; and what did not fit into the sort of world that our senses and our logic built for us was not to be treated as reality. A miracle was held to be incredible simply because it had never been known to happen before. But science itself has killed that frame of mind. We have come to a time when none of us has any idea what may happen next. Hardly a day passes without some new surprise of discovery or of invention; and people who are at all alive are spending their days on the tip-toe of thrilled and breathless expectation. Think how far the area of our common knowledge stretches beyond the area of our grandfathers' experience; and think, if you can, of the kind of world in which, at this rate, our children's children will be living! Unless, indeed, our human folly plunges us before then into an insane war that may bury us and our science in some bottomless grave of oblivion, we are on the threshold of one of the great ages of the world, perhaps the greatest of all: and God only knows what apocalypse may be already knocking at our doors.

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For there are other things afoot beyond the purely physical concerns of science. We are exploring the wonderland of the mind; and we are hardly over the border of that mysterious country. It becomes more and more sure that as yet man has learnt to use only a mere fraction of his latent powers. I saw somewhere the other day the statement that we normally utilize only a tiny proportion of the incredible millions of neurons that constitute the human brain. There are secrets lying asleep within us that will one day be startled into consciousness, and may open to us the gateways of vast unsuspected worlds. I do not profess to understand the meaning of Dr. Einstein's theory of relativity; but in some vague way I apprehend that time and space are not the rigid, everlasting fixities outside of us that we supposed they were, and that our minds have something to do with them. And who knows but that some day among the sleeping treasures of our minds we may find a power that can telescope time and space so that it shall no longer seem an incredible thing to us that Jesus and Moses and Elias should meet together in the presence of Peter and James and John? At any rate, we have reached a point at which the dogmatism of unbelief about this story or any other has ceased to be scientific.

And this is, I think, also true. We shall in future judge the credibility of any recorded event less by its outward and objective character than by its inner significance. When we come to such a story as this of the

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Transfiguration, we shall no doubt first consider the evidence for it and what weight attaches to the evidence. But we shall not then have reached a final conclusion. Seeing that the date and the place are secondary affairs, perhaps no more than devices of the mind for locating experiences and events in life, like lines of latitude and longitude on a map, we shall have to consider the experience in terms of the whole life in which it happened. This story of the Transfiguration, for instance, can we find a meaning in it that fits into the life of Jesus as a whole? Does it fall naturally and rationally into the complete picture? Does it complete anything that went before? Does it account for anything that followed? Does its moral quality cohere with the moral whole of the record? Is it out of drawing or has it a place of its own in the perspective? The form in which it dramatized itself externally may be unusual but that question can wait until we have ascertained whether there was here a significant experience which can be stated intelligibly and be seen to belong to the experience of Jesus as a whole.

I

Now, there is at one point in this story an important parallel with the story of the Baptism. In both cases there was a voice from heaven: and in both cases the voice said practically the same thing. The baptism of Jesus plainly signified his acceptance of that divine

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vocation the sense of which had been growing in Him through the years of his youth at Nazareth and which came to a climax during the religious awakening kindled by John Baptist; and the heavenly voice symbolized and dramatized for Jesus his own inward assurance and conviction that God had accepted Him for the task. There came to Him a sense of a divine endorsement of his self-dedication to the ministry to which He believed God had called Him. And we may reasonably infer that the Transfiguration story dramatized a similar experience. But why should He have had it at this particular moment?

The answer is, I think, clear. In his early Galilean ministry, Jesus hoped that the Rule of God might be ushered in on the crest of a spiritual awakening in the ordinary channels of public religion; but the growing opposition which He met and which reached breaking-point at the healing of the man with the withered hand in Capernaum on the Sabbath day convinced Him that his hope was vain, that He must take his ministry out of the synagogue into the open world. But He found that the opposition still pursued Him and in an aggravated form. Not only were the officers of the national religion on his heels all the time, but they had called in the civil authorities; and the pursuit was so malignant and threatening that Jesus withdrew from Jewish territory and remained away with his disciples for a period of about nine months. It is at the end of that period

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that He announces to his disciples that the Son of Man must go up to Jerusalem.

Now, his public ministry in the synagogue had been frustrated, and his subsequent experience in Galilee had shown Him that the tiresome pursuit of the ecclesiastical authorities and their Herodian allies would make quite impossible a teaching ministry in the country at large. What was He then to do? Was He to be content with a purely private and (as it were) underground propaganda? There was plainly too much at stake to make that a practical solution. More positive and drastic action was needed than a mere subterranean diffusion of the good news. There was an obstruction to be cleared out of the way; and that was a public thing, to be met publicly and, as Jesus saw, to be challenged in its own stronghold. So it grew upon Him that He must go up to Jerusalem.

It was a terrible undertaking for any man. Jesus had already enough experience to know where the road led; and He had historical precedents enough to know what would happen to Him along that road. His was a people that always stoned its prophets; and if He went the same way, He would suffer the same fate. Like those who had gone before Him, He would have to meet the enemy on his own ground; like them He, too, must go to Jerusalem and perish there. So He began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the chief priests and scribes and be killed.

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And the next thing that happened is the experience of the Transfiguration. Observe that He is said to have spoken concerning his decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. That connects the experience definitely with the decision Jesus had reached concerning Himself and his course. Can we doubt then that what had happened to Him at his Baptism now happened again in a more intense and an even more vivid way? A new divine endorsement, a signal re-commission, a fresh mandate, a renewed assurance of being on the right road. He had been compelled by circumstance to accept a high, august, but dangerous destiny; He was staking everything on one terrific throw; and no soul of lowliness like his could stand at that moment without heart-searching, without misgiving. Is that truly the road? Am I the one to take it? And a voice within Him that came from heaven answered: Thou art the man. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And a little later we read that He set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.

II

Does this experience of Jesus mean anything to us? Is there in it some light for our lives?

First of all, have we not here the supreme instance of the paradox of frustration becoming the open door of destiny, of frustration on one plane of effort being turned into a stepping-stone to a higher; which is the

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thing that always happens to the courageous. In his Galilean ministry Jesus found Himself checked, if not checkmated. The malice and cunning of the authorities were driving Him to silence, and He was compelled to find some other way: and so the Teacher was turned into the Doer; He who had preached sermons set out to act them. Precept gave way to practice; and the Man of Vision became also the Man of Action. His teaching still remains, a clearing of undimmed light amid the twilights of wisdom; but we chiefly look upon Him as the sovereign Man of Action, whose whole life was consummated in one perfect Act.

I see here as elsewhere that real life cannot "settle down," though it has temptation enough to do so. There is some entail of inertia clinging to it that bids us sit down when we should be up and doing, that persuades us to be content with the *status quo* when we should be striking out for some regions beyond. If Jesus had been faint-hearted, with how much excuse might He not have succumbed to the difficulties, accepted the barricades with which his enemies in Galilee were encircling Him, and settled down to a pedestrian round of colorless and harmless inconsequences? How often an unexpected difficulty, a momentary frustration, a passage of opposition seems to us a sufficient pretext for quitting the job! When we feel like that, we are suffering from a deficit of life. The world is strewn with beaten men and defeated women who have capitulated to resist-

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ances that life meant them to accept as challenges to their courage and occasions of rising to a new plane and a new power of action. Real life does not know when it is beaten; it treats its failures (so Browning says) as "the triumph's evidence for the fullness of days." It falls to rise, it is "baffled to fight better." It is not idly that Christian sentiment has attached to Jesus the title of "the Lion of Judah," for He had that supreme courage that can convert failure into a mightier faith, that transforms frustration into a new call of God.

But we do not need even a difficulty to persuade us to settle down. There is in us a persistent limpet strain that by imperceptible slow dragging upon us takes the spring and the resiliency out of our lives. We become creatures of routine; we fall into ruts; and life is little more to us than a monotonous round of days, in which a succession of small duties is punctuated by a few small pleasures; and the tragedy is that we become contented with it. You can see it in a dozen ways. That is the explanation of the business that has ceased to grow, of the church that is "stalled," of the home that has lost its charm, of the soul that stands still. We have succumbed to our indolence, and, having found the line of least resistance, we have taken it and stick to it: and that is the worst thing that can happen to us; for it is the end of growth. The significance of life lies in its restlessness, in its divine discontents, in the desire

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of the moth for the star; in its pioneering, adventurous, exploring energy; and when we let this impulse die down in us, the limpet wins, and the spring goes out of our footsteps and the wings that life has given us wither away. Do you remember how in their journey through the wilderness the children of Israel were held up at Mount Hor, making a fruitless circuit of it for many days? Then the voice of the Lord came to them: "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn ye northward." And that is the word of God to many a man and to many a church today. The promised land is ahead of us; and we are defrauding ourselves of the wonder and the glory of life when we surrender to this limpet "carry-over" in our constitution. Not far from the home of my childhood there was a waterfall on a salmon river; and just before the spawning season it was a great sight to watch the salmon going up the river. When they reached the pool at the foot of the fall, they circled round and round for a time; and then one and then another would break water and make a spring for the upper level. Many of us are like the salmon in the pool, held there by custom, company, fear, what not; but there are levels above levels of glorious life to be achieved by those who have the courage to make the spring out of this imprisoning pool of habit and inertia. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward"; that is the good word for every living soul. In his day Jesus heard it and went.

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III

And then (this is my second point) there is a transfiguration. There was no miracle in the Transfiguration on the Mount: that kind of thing is common enough: if there was a difference in the Transfiguration of Jesus, it was a difference of degree and not of kind. We know that a great emotion can make a great difference to the look on a man's face; and nowadays when no man dare say where the body ends and the soul begins, and seeing that they are organs of the same life, it should not seem a wholly incredible thing that a great exaltation of soul should have some refining effect even upon the texture of the flesh. For I myself have seen how great grace in a man's soul may induce a strange grace in his bodily bearing. We all look different in a moment of great happiness. I have seen a piece of good news kindle an unexpected light in a dull man's eye. I have seen young faces glow in the first rapture of their knowledge of Christ. I have seen the glory in the face of the mother as she looked upon her first-born. But I can imagine no exaltation of spirit higher than that which must come from the assurance of being the chosen of God for a great enterprise; few men have had, perhaps no man could have that sense, as it came to Jesus; and that He seemed transfigured does not surprise me.

But there is here something more momentous than exaltation of spirit. We are in the presence of a new

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potency, a new dimension of life,—a life lifted above the flow of time; and that is the element in the story that mostly baffles us. Yet, why should it? Have we not the feeling in our bones that time and space are together a drag upon life, and are we not forever trying to shake them off? They are the walls of a prison from which life is always striving to escape. What other is the meaning of our growing achievement of speed than that it is an effort to transcend the bondage of “miles-per-hour,” to be in two places at the same time? And we have nearly done it, in these days when I, preaching in Montreal, can be heard simultaneously in Newfoundland, Georgia, Iowa and Alberta. It is not time and space that now limit us seriously; it is matter. It has been said that man is a “time-binder”; in history and in imagination he can relive the past in the present. And somewhere among the unrealized resources of our mind perhaps there is a power that may be able to transport us into times long past; or into ages yet to come. That is, however, now only a curious speculation: the practical point is that here amid time there is not far from us a power that may give us the experience of a timeless life; and that, if I am not mistaken, is what the Fourth Gospel calls *eternal life*.

Professor Santayana says that it is not the length but the height of life that counts. Who was it that spoke of “one glorious hour of crowded life”? It is well that life should be long; it is better that it should

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be high; it is best that it should be both. Intensity of life is of more consequence than duration of life. Jesus died at thirty-three. There was the high moment at the Jordan; and there was a higher, on the Mount; the highest was yet to come. And I dare to say that of all the moments in a life, there is none higher, none more intense, none more charged with realization, than when the thick opaque frontiers of time and place and matter are dissolved awhile, and we taste the power of the world to come, see and hear unutterable things. Such moments are rare and brief; but we become aware in them of a new dimension of life within ourselves; and we come out again into the workaday world, trailing clouds of glory after us.

I see Jesus coming down from the Mount; and when He comes down into the valley the devils begin to fly before Him. We send no devils flying—even out of ourselves, not to speak of any lunatic lads that may be about. But that is because we have had no mount of transfiguration. And for the rest of the story, I have the sense of Jesus striding the earth like a Colossus, traveling in the greatness of his might, unafraid and undoubting, to assail the hoary Bastilles of privilege, reaction and corruption in which the human spirit lay prisoned. And He set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.

And I see myself, a poor, futile blunderer, timid, hesitating, beating the air; conceiving like projects and

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uttering great swelling words about them; bulging with pride and eaten up with vanity, yet signifying next to nothing at all. Oh, the comedy of it; and oh, the tragedy of it! Can it be that I have not yet discovered a Jerusalem toward which to set my face and my feet?

II

THE GARDEN

II

THE GARDEN

GETHSEMANE is ground no less holy and in some ways more charged with mystery than Calvary. The Cross was a public affair enacted in open daylight; but in the Garden there was a deliberate withdrawal into a seclusion so deep that we are left standing baffled, and with bowed head, a long way off. It was in the nature of the case that the Cross should be a public transaction, done where all men might see it. It was their affair as well as his. But the penultimate crisis in the unfolding of the great drama had to be passed through out of sight; and one has the sense that any effort to invade this privacy is like the impertinence of small boys peeping over a garden wall. Yet some endeavor to understand and even to share this dark experience would seem essential to an intelligent reading of the inner workings of the mind of Jesus as a whole.

I

You will remember that we saw how the force of circumstances at a particular stage in the experience of

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Jesus turned the Teacher into a Doer; the Man of Vision became also the Man of Action. But there was one aspect of the case which we did not consider. Sometime during his own withdrawal from Galilee, He seemed to have sent his disciples out on an errand of enquiry, to see how the land lay in Galilee. On their return He asked them concerning the impression He had made upon the public mind; and the answer He received was that the common folk confidently placed Him in the great prophet succession; to them, He ranked with Jeremiah and Elijah. And then Peter, in answer to a further question, declared Him to be the Christ of God. Whether Peter meant by this that He was the expected Messiah is not clear; but there can be no doubt that Peter saw, however dimly, that Jesus was something more than a teacher whose life was to be spent in a round of local preaching and that He was destined to *act* in some large and signal fashion on the plane of the public life of the nation. He was a public figure of national significance.

We cannot forget that Jesus started out upon his ministry with the hope that his own people might first accept the Rule of God and then, in the spirit of the finest prophetic hope, become its heralds in the world. He accepted the doctrine of the divine vocation of his nation; its place and office in the world as the messenger of God; and for my part, I cannot see that He ever relinquished this hope until He saw near the end how vain it was. His business was to win his nation into

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the knowledge and the service of the Kingdom of God and make it the nucleus and the organ of the kingdom of the world. But in his first plan of campaign He had been foiled by the craft and assiduity of his enemies; and so, too, in his second. His synagogue ministry, his ministry in the house and the field and by the lakeside, both had alike been frustrated. But He did not give up hope in the people. He had evidence that they believed in Him; and He found that the intuitions of those who knew Him best confirmed his own sense that He was now called to some signal public action. Presently the common folk would be going up in their hundreds to Jerusalem for the Passover; and that was obviously the time to act. He would stand in his own person over against the Herod-Caiaphas-Pilate world, oppose Himself to the many-headed "prince of this world"; and his disciples' report persuaded Him that when the common folk saw the issue dramatized thus signally and publicly, they would range themselves with the Kingdom of God: and Israel would blossom out into that new creative and redemptive life on the plane of the whole world of which the prophets had spoken. This was the vision, the expectation with which He went up to Jerusalem. Not that He had any illusion concerning what would happen to Himself. Whatever the people did, the chief priests and the scribes would reject Him, as they had always rejected the prophets. But what befell Him was a little thing, if only the people were saved.

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So He went up to Jerusalem: and from the moment He came within sight of the city walls his course assumed a public character in strange contrast with the sought-out seclusion of the previous months. Deliberately He challenged the whole complex thing that stood in the way of the Kingdom. First, He challenged what we would call the State; and then He challenged what we would call the Church.

(i) The manner of his entry into Jerusalem was a direct criticism of the whole secular organization of life. That was based on dominion and force; and life was being spent and wasted either in establishing or resisting the domination of life by force and violence. Before his eyes, there was a vast tragedy developing: on the one hand there was the Roman imperial system; and over against it, in hot rebellion, the Zealot movement, the nationalist physical force party. But the hostile groups belonged to the same moral camp; they were believers in force, in violence, in dominion. And they were less opposed to one another than they were both opposed to the Son of Man and the Kingdom of God. And Jesus set up in the face of both the standard of the Kingdom; He went into Jerusalem riding on an ass, to affirm in the imagery of an old prophecy, the sovereignty of the Son of Man and of humanity in Him. It was in a true sense a political demonstration, a public protest against the ascendancy of force, a public demand for the subordination of political systems to spiritual and humane ends.

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(ii) But He challenged the Church no less dramatically. This was the significance of the cleansing of the Temple. The Temple area was being exploited by the cupidity of its officials and the Father's house had been made a den of thieves. If his entry to the city had been a political, the cleansing of the Temple was essentially a religious demonstration. It was a public protest against the prostitution of the sanctuary to corrupt ends, a public demand for pure religion and undefiled, at the sources of the religious life of his people.

There was great popular enthusiasm at his entry to the city; but we read of none after the cleansing of the Temple. We are told that there was astonishment at his teaching; but there are no signs in the record of any popular movement in his favor. Let the student of the psychology of the crowd explain this: but however it is to be explained, the multitude boxed the compass in a few days,—that is certain. One day they were crying: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"; four days later it was: "Away with him: crucify him." It is no rash inference that Jesus was not long in seeing that the issue He had looked for was in doubt. The crowd behaved in a fashion true to type; and it is no mere cynicism that reflects upon the fickleness of popular favor. One sometimes wonders whether this modern democratic faith is not a mere superstition. "Vox populi," we say, "vox Dei." But is it? And when is it? Was it the voice of God that cried, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" and "Away

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with him; crucify him"? It is a commonplace of historical study that the voice of God is more often than not the voice of a minority. It may indeed be that, in spaces of tranquillity, the heart of the people is (as Dora Greenwell says) in the right place: but beware of it in a moment of danger or of excitement. For hidden away in our frame is that ugly and dangerous entail from the herd which once stirred suppresses the judgment and stampedes the whole man. And a man is no longer a man but a beast in a herd. But here was something more tragic than popular fickleness,—a colossal failure of spiritual insight in a people whose whole discipline should have made them incapable of it. And as the days wore on, the doubts crowded on the mind of Jesus. Would the people see the point? Would they choose his world or the Herod-Caiaphas-Pilate world? Could they divine the gulf that yawned between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world? Between the moral demands of the divine order and the corruption of the world of Caiaphas and Herod? Perhaps He was expecting too much. But if that people with their own peculiar discipline, with their tradition of prophecy, could not see this antithesis, what people on earth ever would?

It was this heart-breaking doubt that took Jesus to Gethsemane. He saw the practical certainty that his people would make a wrong choice; and He foresaw what that meant. It would be the last wild plunge into spiritual bankruptcy and moral insolvency, the final for-

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feiture of that vocation and destiny to which the people had been called and for which they had been prepared by their long history. They were on the brink of the great refusal. Do you wonder then that Jesus shrank from pressing the issue through to its last term? It seems to me to be perfectly natural that He should have hesitated before so appalling a prospect as the spiritual suicide of a people, and his own people at that: and that He should have gone into the solitudes to see whether there was not anywhere in the wide Providence of God some other way. And what a search it was,—a search that tore his heart to shreds and brought out upon his face a sweat of blood. But not all his heart-searching could find Him absolution from the dark task. No door was opened to Him. He had to hold to the road to its end.

II

Now into that holy privacy, we have no open door: yet like Peter and James and John we may stand a stone's throw away and watch, please God, a little more attentively than they.

First of all we see the loneliness of that tortured form. Jesus took his crisis into the solitude; He was familiar already with solitude and knew its uses. He had learned that a man must face the graver crises of life alone. That is a lesson that we have not mastered. Indeed, we are afraid of solitude, afraid, it may be, of meeting ourselves in a lonely place, perhaps even more

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of meeting God. We live too much in public, having as much privacy (as someone has said) as a goldfish. Yet man is an animal at once social and solitary: he cannot be himself without society; and neither can he be himself with nothing but society. The health and wealth of life depend upon our striking a right balance between society and solitude. The very logic of our freedom seems to require that we should have moments when we stand, each of us alone, our souls stripped and naked, before God. Indeed, the highest term of self-consciousness is not reached until a man leaves even his nearest and best-beloved behind him and goes on by himself into the solitude where his soul may meet none but God. It may be the self-consciousness of pain, the poignant height of a great remorse; or the self-consciousness of joy, the exaltation of a vast thankfulness; or the ravaging self-consciousness of perplexity, the bewilderment of an unlit dilemma. But in any case, we do not feel our individual selfhood at its summit until we bring our pains, our joys, our perplexities into the untenanted presence of God. There is, moreover, an inevitable quality in our fellowship, a social pressure which blurs the distinctive feature of our individuality, dulls the finer edges of our sensibility, irons out the subtle differentiations which make us ourselves, and tends to assimilate us all to a single type. So we need to seek out the solitude in order to find ourselves again, to adjust the balance, to let our individuality take its own proper shape, and to give breathing space to

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struggling shoots of moral aspiration and spiritual character which the pressure of the social life which we share is apt to choke. For those of us whose lives have fallen chiefly in public places, this habit is almost necessary to salvation, certainly necessary to effectual living. Those great souls who have served mankind best had great familiarity with solitude. John Wesley never spent less than three hours a day alone; sometimes he spent as many as nine. And if we are to bring the offering of a full and rich individuality to the life of the society in which we live, there are occasions on which we should shun society and dwell in the wilderness where solitude can work out its special grace of restoration, self-recovery and empowerment upon us. Dr. Moffatt in a sermon in England the other day said, "Five minutes of serious thought about God every day would mean a fount of fresh life." And, O God, how we need it!

III

Second: It is worth observing how loyally Jesus sought relief from the situation in which He found himself *within* the will of God. He could have averted the danger into which his action had led his people by simply disappearing or by recanting or by coming to terms with the authorities. But from the beginning it is plain that He did not contemplate any way of escape that lay outside the will of God. The will of God for Him was that He should go ahead: and He was not

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afraid for Himself; for Him physical death had no terror. But did the will of God for Him require his people's ruin? Must they be forced to throw away their destiny? Was there not now, at the eleventh hour, some way of escape not incongruous with the will of God? But Jesus found no alternative; and his agony brought Him no relief. "*Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.*"

It is one of the tragedies of this tangled life that it is sometimes impossible for a man to do what he believes to be the will of God for himself without seeming to put others in the wrong or to do them actual injury; and for sensitive souls there is no agony in life comparable to that which springs from the conflict of loyalties. There was Jesus torn between the will of God and his love of his people; and it represents on a large dramatic scale the painful dilemmas which most devout and honorable persons have to face in life. One plain moral of all this is that we should be perfectly sure that when we speak of the will of God for ourselves we should know what we are talking about. There is a shallow and overfamiliar piety which talks glibly about the will of God as though the knowledge of it were as cheaply and as easily acquired as a pair of old shoes. But the will of God is a revelation that comes only to patient waiting, to watchful and prayerful seeking; and it is the main business of the discipline of solitude and the practice of prayer to bring us that priceless knowledge of what God has appointed for us. And the other

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moral is surely that in the dilemmas of life when love, friendship, political obligation or any other loyalty may point a way other than the will of God, it is our business not to reach any hurried or light-hearted conclusion, but to bring it into the light of God and to keep it there until the way stands out inevitable and clear.

And then there is nothing for it but acceptance. "*Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.*" Out of the Garden Jesus walked with calm, unperturbed footfall: and from that moment to the end, He did not hesitate. For acceptance is strength. We know that in a dozen ways in our common experience of life. You know the peace that comes with certainty. How often during the war one heard from some heart-wrung mother whose boy had been reported missing: "If only I knew whether he was alive or dead!" Or you have a difficult decision to make; and you spend days in making up your mind and what unhappy days those often are! Then you make up your mind and you know what serenity comes to your soul when your indecision ceases. Sometimes some calamity threatens you—a great sorrow or a great material loss—and as it draws nearer, it becomes to all appearances inevitable. How troubled your spirit is! But when you bring yourself to the point of accepting it as inevitable, have you not been aware of a subtle invasion of strength into your soul so that you know that you can stand up to it when it comes? The supreme strength of life is the acceptance of the will of God in scorn of the consequence. It may

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bring you into broken waters: its road may lie through desert and wilderness: it may send upon you storm and tempest: it may tear your heart: but your acceptance of it is your strength: you will be able to stand all that may happen to you. For at last "in His will is our peace," as Dante said; and it is always right, always wise, always safe to take the risk of accepting and doing what we believe to be the will of God.

IV

Last of all observe this: The prospect which drove Jesus to the Garden—the fear of his people's apostasy—hardened into fact: and the hope upon which He had staked everything was denied. The people chose Barabbas and went back on the hope of the Kingdom. They (so to speak) voted themselves out of the purpose of God. But we look back over the centuries and see that though the immediate object was not attained, a greater object was. For out of a small handful of people that looked upon the Cross through their tears, God created a new Israel to do the work that the Jewish people might have done. Of that we shall try to think a little later. Meantime we may reflect that our frustration is not the frustration of God. God is not left resourceless by our failures or what seem to us to be failures: and, out of our hapless miscarriages, He can bring forth a larger good. And it is therefore not for us to be overconcerned with consequences. We may

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dread or deplore the immediate consequences that may sometimes threaten to accrue from right-doing; but the immediate consequences are only incidental to those farther consequences which the Father keeps in his own power. They are links in a chain that leads to some divine objective beyond our sight. Our task is to do the right thing now, and commit the results, whatever they may be, to God. At the very best we can only see a move or two ahead in this game of life; and even then we can never be sure that our anticipations are right. Our real concern is with the next move—as Jesus' was in the Garden: and it is our wisdom to say with Newman,

I do not ask to see the distant scene,
One step enough for me.

Find out in the presence of God what the next right step is: accept it and do it: and leave the consequences to the Providence of God. And this is the rule for both the lesser and the greater issues of life. Times there are when no great consequences may seem to be involved: but you can never tell. A little spark can kindle a great fire. We dare not take a single moment of life less than seriously; for, in this complex entanglement of causes and effects, a false step may let loose a very avalanche of disaster. Other times there are when a grave choice has to be made, and you may be driven to a very Gethsemane of heart-searching and agonized bewilderment: and your road will not be cleared save by deep and ex-

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hausting travail of soul. But the strategy is always the same; take your crisis whether it be great or small into the solitudes of God: seek until you are sure what the next right thing to do is: and then go and do it: and leave the consequences to God.

III

THE GREEN HILL

III

THE GREEN HILL

EVEN if Calvary stood alone, it should be enough to warn us of the fatuousness of weighing the importance of an event by what it seems outwardly to be at the moment of its happening. The greater part of life is always out of sight: and there is much more in any event than meets the eye of the man in the street, or even than its actors intend. It is only when you get inside the event (so to speak) and make a qualitative test of it that you begin to see its real significance. Pilate thought he was striking a shrewd blow for the Empire, and Caiaphas thought he was making a wise move for the Church, by letting Jesus be put to death. Both made the usual mistake of the cunning politician whether in Church or state. So great a mistake, indeed, that Pilate released a stream of events which in a few generations shook the Empire and compelled it to come to terms with the followers of the Crucified; and Caiaphas created a situation which in little more than a generation brought Jerusalem down in ruins and the Jewish nation with it. I am told that in certain classes of insurance the most difficult problem

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is to assess the moral hazard. Pilate and Caiaphas made the mistake of not allowing for the "moral hazard" in their actions. They played for political and ecclesiastical safety, and for the moment gained the point. But they did not know that they were setting afoot unseen forces that were to bring them and their shallow shrewdness to naught. What really happened that day was something that none of the actors saw.

With the broad issues that were involved we have today no immediate concern. What our present purpose requires is that we should try to divine what was going on in the mind and heart of the central figure in the event. We have, to be sure, set ourselves a task of which we shall accomplish but a little part: but that, however little it may be, is worth doing. For we shall be contemplating life at its height; and we shall be confronted with that bewildering paradox which holds somewhere within itself the final meaning of our life: namely, that the height of life was reached in the depth of what was and is, by all the standards of common judgment, a complete and unqualified failure. Dogma and sentiment have combined to envelop Calvary in a blurring haze; and the darkness of that midday hour has been softened by the light that at last dawned out of it. What we have to do requires an impossible feat: to stand before the Cross and to forget its consequences. Let us do the best we can.

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I

On the passage between Gethsemane and the Cross, Jesus seems to travel through a wilderness of impertinences. The proceedings in the courts, the examinations and the cross-examinations, the coming and going seem to have very little to do with Him. He moves along one plane; and the rest move along another. And Jesus seems to be the only person on the stage who keeps his head. Once the crisis of Gethsemane was over, He became invulnerable; He was secure in the confidence and the tranquillity of his own heart. He was living in a universe within which nothing his enemies could do would avail to hurt Him. He was safe in the vast security of his Father's will. Not, indeed, that He was abstracted from men. He saw them on the other side of the gulf and yearned with a breaking heart to bring them over to his side. But they would not. It was the old story. "*How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" And in the Fourth Gospel account of the trial before Pilate, you may read with what patience He sought to save Pilate's soul, throwing bridge after bridge over the gulf and bidding Pilate cross over. But Pilate did not want his soul saved. And Jesus went on, the sorrowful solitary way of the malefactor. That they thought Him worthy of death made Him sorry for them and not for Himself. And one who looks upon that scene with any

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realism of moral insight sees all the positions reversed. Before the high court of heaven, the prisoner sat in judgment; and the judges were in the dock: and the crowning irony is that when they had condemned Him to death, He from his gibbet recommends them to mercy. And that we do not see the sheer topsy-turvydom of those hours simply means that we are standing on our heads and seeing the spectacle upside down.

We are so habituated to the story that it no longer strikes us as astonishing that Jesus was not provoked either to retaliation or to bitterness: and He had indeed provocation enough. What indignity and injustice a man might suffer He suffered. False witness and crooked judgment, insult and derision, all came to Him. But He let no word escape his lips in anger or ill-will. Whatever else might come to pass He would keep his spirit purged of bitterness: He declined to treat as enemies the men who were his enemies. It was no negative mood that this attitude reflected: and how positive was his own feeling comes out in that signal and dramatic moment when He prayed from the Cross that his enemies might be forgiven. We may speak of the attributes of Jesus as we will,—of his tranquillity, his confidence, his fearlessness, his courage,—in that difficult and heart-racking passage; but in that moment on the Cross you have something vaster and more magnificent than any of these. If He seemed detached and on some other plane than that of his enemies during his trial, in that moment on the Cross He rises to a stature in-

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credibly splendid. He had come through the mire of hate and lies; and it had left no spot or stain upon his love. And the final insult of crucifixion left it untouched and undiminished. "The courage which can face the ultimate defeat of a life of goodwill and yet crave forgiveness for a blind and angry mob because ignorance has no light, that is . . . victory, if that fine word has any meaning at all."

The thing is prodigious, however you look at it; and it has, I imagine, two effects upon us. The first is to give us a sharp and undeniable sense of moral beggary, the conviction that we have not it in us to do that kind of thing. It makes us feel morally spineless and anæmic. The other effect is what mankind has always felt, the sense that there is an extra-human quality in that moment, as though God were praying to Himself: and with that the gladdening hope that there is somewhere in the wide universe forgiveness for the worst of men, and for the worst of deeds. I have never yet found a doctrine of atonement that seems to me to cover the facts of life congruously with the Christian revelation of God. But I am not concerned about that. For I find here all the atonement that I shall ever need. For indeed every act of forgiveness is an atonement,—I mean, of true forgiveness, which is something very different from an easy-going oblivion or merely letting bygones be bygones. You remember that Jesus in a parable likens sin to a bad debt and forgiveness to writing off the bad debt. But when you write off a bad

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debt, what you have really done is to take the debt upon yourself. You have made yourself your own debtor. And in all forgiveness there is that taking over upon ourselves of the sin, accepting the sin and suffering its consequences in ourselves not only without retaliation but all the while treating the sinner as though the sin had never been. Forgiveness is a high and august affair, a priestly and sacrificial motion of the soul. It was William Blake who said that every kindness is a little death in the divine image; and even more obviously forgiveness is a death in the divine image. To the natural man it is the hardest kind of self-mortification; to any man it is the finest form of self-denial; and always it is the noblest achievement of love. And I find all the assurance of atonement that I want in that divine moment on the Cross. Take away the time and the place: try to see the event from within: and see if the historical moment does not dissolve; and what you behold within and beyond is the God whose heart is eternally pierced because He bears upon Himself the sins of the world so that folk like you and me may live. The Universe that could produce that sublime moment on Calvary holds an inexhaustible well of forgiveness at its heart.

II

This is surely the height of life, this miracle of invincible forgivingness, this love that would not die. But this peak does not stand alone. For presently we

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hear another word, a word charged with the sorrow of all time. "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" Jesus was quoting from a psalm that He knew well, a psalm that had long before told a sorrow like his own and now, in this final moment of darkness, these words came to his lips as it were inevitably. That was how He felt. You may find it difficult to reconcile this word with a rigid doctrine of the Person of Christ: but you have to accept the word as it stands and in what it implies. It is the admission of final failure, the extinction of the last lingering hope. The fear that had driven Jesus into the Garden had come true. Even to the last He had hoped against hope, hoped wistfully, hoped hungrily for some flash of illumination that might even at the eleventh hour save this people that He loved and upon whom He had staked his expectation of the Kingdom of God, from the great refusal. But the heavens were as brass. And as the tide of life ebbed away, the hope died within Him.

And when, a few moments later, He said, "*It is finished,*" He meant simply: This is the end of everything. We have sometimes taken this word from its context and reversed its meaning, as though Jesus meant: The work is now successfully completed. But Jesus did not mean that He had succeeded, He meant that He had failed. And that is the only meaning that is not incongruous with the cry of dereliction. If your doctrine of the Person of Christ requires you to believe that Jesus saw something beyond that moment, then

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the cry of dereliction is meaningless and insincere, as though in that terrible moment Jesus was play-acting; or else you have to explain it away. I can reasonably interpret the word only as meaning that Jesus thought that He had utterly failed and that God had (as the saying is) gone back on Him. Mr. Chesterton commenting on this cry says that for a moment God Himself became an atheist; and while we may recoil from the violence of the paradox, it is at least true that if God had gone back on the Son of Man in whom was nothing but a flame of pure truth and pure love, then God was indeed a renegade and a traitor to Himself: and we should want no more than we could help to do with such a God. The blackness of that moment springs from the fact that Jesus supposed that God had forsaken Him.

Yet, do you wonder? Here He was on the point of death. He had lived his whole life for one thing, and He had done so, as He believed, at the call of God. He gave his nights and his days to the winning of his people into the Kingdom of God, believing that it was their destiny to become the heralds of that Kingdom in the world. His business had been to rescue and recreate Israel; and here was Israel before his eyes committing suicide and repudiating his hope and theirs. Do you marvel that He should think that his life had miscarried? and that He should wonder what God was about that He should suffer this thing to happen, that the people should perish and this effort should go for nothing?

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Had He not always believed that God would vindicate love and faithfulness? And now, where was God? He was distressed not because God was letting Him die (He had always been willing to die) but because God was letting Him *fail*.

But you will please notice that the cry was "My God, my God"; it was a cry of faith no less than a cry of despair. And his last word was: "*Into thy hands I commend my spirit.*" You are therefore confronted with this tremendous circumstance, that though He supposed God had forsaken Him, He still trusted God. "My God, my God!" "Though he slay me," cried Job, "yet will I trust him"; but Jesus goes a step further: Even though He turn his back on me and let my word vanish in utter failure and allow me to perish unvindicated, yet will I trust Him. The prayer for his enemies revealed an unconquerable love; and the cry of dereliction revealed an unconquerable faith. The great task He had lived for had to miscarry and fail in order that his faith might be proved invincible. He had to be defeated in order that He might triumph. And this is no less prodigious a feat than the other: to hold an undefeated faith in the teeth of utter failure; to see hope die, and that even then faith should live; to face the blackness of despair and still to go on trusting God.

III

And this is the everlasting splendor of the Cross, this spectacle of a love that would not let go of man,

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and of a faith that would not let go of God: and that in the face of all the resistances and all the hazards and all the assaults that love and faith have ever to encounter; and you have only to review your own record to realize the height and the glory of this victory . It would have satisfied a certain sentimental sense of dramatic fitness in us if the prayer for his enemies had broken their hearts and brought them contrite and penitent to their knees; or if God by some staggering miracle had delivered Him from the Cross in the face of his dumb-founded enemies. But the perennial astonishment of his love and faith remains because He drank the cup of hatred and failure to its dregs, and his life went out in darkness. He would not stand on the height on which He now stands forever if the story of Calvary had had a happy ending, the sort of ending that meets the demands of our feelings. He stands where He does just because He had no relief, no compensation, and God did not interfere. But what, in such an hour, would have become of you and me? What, indeed, in vastly less exacting hours does become of us? Of you and me who cannot stand opposition without irritability, who cannot endure insult or injury without bitterness and retaliation, who cannot face the small annoyances and vexations of life without loss of temper and spleen? Of you and me who are so easily disheartened in our tasks by petty resistances and obstacles, who are so ready to quit because we cannot have everything our own way, and whom failure or sorrow or even the

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prospect of them can so quickly drive to rebellious unbelief? Does not that spectacle of unsundered faith and undefeated love make you feel a rather deplorable and pitiful kind of moral dwarf?

And out of all this comes one momentous and pregnant reflection, which we may well take to our hearts. We have all our work to do in the world; and it is our business to do it the best we know how; but we ourselves are more important than our work whatever that work may be; and what I shall have to answer for in the end is not the thing I did, but the thing I was. We lay much emphasis on service nowadays: and it is right that we should serve; but it is much more important to be sure why and how we serve. It is, I understand, a current business adage that service pays; but the service which you give because it pays is a poor thing. The only abidingly valuable service is that which you give because you must; a thing that springs spontaneously out of character, the natural emanation of a true personality; the service which has no eye upon the results, which is not troubled about success or failure, but goes on through both and is unconcerned with either. This thing that we call personality stands between God and Man, linked to Man by love, and to God by faith; and it is at its height when, bound by an unyielding love to Man and by an indomitable faith to God, it simply lives out its own inherent logic where it stands. And not anything it does, but the thing it is and becomes, is the greatest and most fruitful gift it can give to God and

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Man. We transcend our work: and though our work may immediately fail as the work of Jesus did, we survive our work; and the thing I was lives on when the thing I failed to do is forgotten and forgiven. We have here a new doctrine of success: not new, indeed, but a doctrine forgotten by this generation. Its test of success is quantitative; how big, how prominent, how conspicuous, how powerful, how wealthy a man is; we judge his success by the size and the number of things he has acquired or done. But the only valid test is the qualitative, what a man is and how he acquired and did the things, whether many or few, whether great or little, that fell to him. And the moment of a man's complete external failure may be the moment of his perfect inward triumph. Even the defeat of his projects may only show forth the victory of his personality. To give one's life to a great and beneficent task, to some adventure of redemption, to be resisted and to be frustrated again and again, and still to carry on without bitterness and without despair, and then in the end to be finally defeated, and in that hour still to keep love and faith unspotted and undiminished,—that is the topmost height of life. To love when hate is trampling you underfoot in its mud, to trust and believe when your dearest hope lies dead, a mangled corpse, that is the final splendor of personality; and whatever else may fail, that does not fail; whatever else may die, that cannot die. And the surest thing that we can say concerning that dark hour is that though Jesus thought and

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said "*It is finished*," the real business had only begun. And out of it came a mightier power of life than even Jesus had dreamt of.

It is no unworthy thing to wish to count for something and to do a great work in the world; but we shall count in the final audit not by the measure of our capacity, our business, our energy, but of the tenacity and vitality of our faith and our love. There is no work we can do in the world that can serve the world as can the faith and the love which live in us; and no work can count at last except the work that faith and love set us to do. It is not for us to be concerned with the fate of our labors, whether they succeed or they fail: it is for us to preserve love and to keep faith. We may make our plans according to the best knowledge and wisdom that we have, and we may live to see them brought to nought, as Jesus did; but we may yet be serving God's greater plans for us and for the world not merely in spite of but even through our failures. But our concern is not even with that. It is that faith and love should live and grow and never die in our souls. We are gathered together at this hour chiefly that we may reinforce and renew our faith and our love: and you know how the little love and the little faith we have need reinforcement and renewal. Because the days are evil, because men are perverse, because our wills are weak, love and faith are hard put to it to hold up their heads and sometimes would fain lie down and die. And it is well that we should spend a moment to remember

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Him whose love did not go down before the worst that man could do, and whose faith survived the nether darkness of despair, and in whose company we may drink deep draughts of vivifying grace that may strengthen the faith and love to meet the storm and the stress that they cannot escape in the treacherous and trackless wilderness of this world.

IV

THE OTHER GARDEN

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IV

THE OTHER GARDEN

TWENTY years ago, everybody was talking about Frederic W. B. Myers' great book, "Personality and the Survival of Bodily Death," and I quoted in a sermon on the Easter morning of 1904, a passage from the book in which Myers said that in twenty years from that time the advances that would have been made by them in psychical research would put the truth of the Resurrection story beyond reasonable doubt. The time has passed; but if there is less scepticism about the Resurrection, it is not on account of any advance that has been made in psychical research. For in spite of the prestige given to it by distinguished names like those of Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Conan Doyle, psychical research is still compassing the same old mountain and has broken no essentially new ground.

But it is undoubtedly true that there is, if not less scepticism about the truth of the Resurrection story, a disposition to a mood of suspended judgment. Certainly there is much less dogmatic disbelief. But that has not come to pass because of psychical research. It

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is because science has surprised itself into open-mindedness. It has, as I have said, reached a new way of thinking about time and space; it is today reaching a new way of thinking about the matter; it is thinking in new ways about life and its evolution. Nothing seems quite the same in the eyes of science as it did even twenty years ago. It seems to have reached and to have crossed the frontier of a new world of experiment and thought; and not even the farthest-seeing scientist would venture to predict confidently what new discoveries may be awaiting our search in this untraveled region. There are today experiments being made with life and its propagation which may any day make many of our most confident generalizations look silly. Dogmatists of whatever stripe should not venture in these days to talk above a whisper. At this present time, cocksureness of affirmation or of denial is not in order among intelligent men.

Scepticism about the Resurrection as about any other abnormal happening springs simply from its abnormality. It was an event which was out of analogy with our common experience. We see men die and disappear: here was one who died and appeared again. The thing was suspicious because it had not happened before. And the old answer to this objection still seems to me to be sound. Why should an abnormal thing not happen to an individual the like of whom had not before and has not since, by common consent, been seen? Is the level of life of the ordinary man the highest level

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that life may reach in any man? Is there a quality of life, a power of life possible to man which transcends that of the average man as we know him? We know that there are different levels of life. St. Paul saw this long ago. "All flesh," he says, "is not the same flesh. There is one flesh of men, and another of beasts, and another flesh of birds and another of fishes." It is the same life that works these changes in the texture of its bodily integument: it is the life that you see in the amoeba which has created the brain and the nervous system in man, an achievement which to those who are sensitive to its wonder seems much more marvelous than the creation of the physical universe. All the way up, the Spirit of Life has been climbing, from level to level, and as it climbed, manipulating and shaping matter more and more appropriately to ever higher uses: and it seems to be not beyond reasonable belief, nor even beyond a just scientific expectation that there should appear in the world a power of life, a level of life which so far exceeds the life of the average man as to be able to rise above the accident of bodily death and appear in personal presence before man: a power of life that might emerge from the darkness of death as you and I awake out of sleep. That this has not happened since does not mean that it did not happen then or that it cannot happen again. It simply means that once upon a time a unique power of life indwelt a human body.

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I

Now it has been my main purpose to show that there was a unique quality and power of life manifested in Jesus, an energy of life that transformed its very frustrations into occasions of new power; an ascending life which turned opposition and obstruction into stepping-stones to a higher level of vision and vitality. We have seen how the frustration of the Galilean ministry turned the Teacher into the Doer; and sent Him to challenge in his own person the hydra of evil that hindered the Kingdom, alone against the world, yet at peace in his own soul. We saw how disillusionment and disappointment because of the defection of the people upon whom He had staked his expectation of the Kingdom, drove Him into the lonely anguish of Gethsemane: and how He came out armed in a strange invulnerability, with an exaltation of life that lifted Him "above the battle" so that He passed by untouched by the sea of treachery and myopic cunning by which He was surrounded, walking as on dry land. Finally we see Him rising to the towering climax of a faith that survived the sense of utter failure and a love that did not haul down its flag before the worst that human hate could do. There you have the high-water mark of life, that moment in which all the outward moral supports and ministries of life are ruthlessly and wholly torn away from Him and Jesus rises within Himself, through the tortures of his dying body, to this supreme spiritual triumph of un-

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defeated faith and unsundered life. "Truly," said the centurion, sensing a quality of life beyond his experience, "this is the Son of God"; and he meant what a modern man might mean by saying: This is the superman, the man in whom human meets divine; and I dare to say that no man who studies the story with understanding can escape the sense that here for one luminous moment was manifested an ultra-human power and quality of life, that life-beyond-life which is the appointed destiny of man.

Looking at all this, I do not wonder that there was a Resurrection. I should wonder more if there had been no Resurrection or something like it. I should find myself in great difficulties about God and Man and about the fundamental sanity of the universe if something had not happened afterwards, which should be proportionate to the transcendent height and power which life reached on the Cross. Calvary requires a commensurate sequel. The high points of history come in clusters: and just as the Transfiguration and the triumph of Gethsemane led up to the Cross, so as inevitably the Resurrection followed it. You cannot measure a passage like this by your workaday foot rule. Here you have life outstripping the measures of common experience. Here is the realm of the unexpected, the unpredictable; and if it takes your breath away, it is because your mind is a stranger in this world. You are living somewhere else. Here, in a strong flaming thrust, life breaks through the level undistinguished

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crust of the normal and rises to a height at which things are bound to happen that are as far above our daily rule-of-thumb as Westminster Abbey is above the architectural maxims of the ant hill. You are not in a position to pass judgment upon the credibility of the Resurrection story until you have begun to "sense" the spiritual miracle of the Cross.

II

Now you will observe that I have been speaking of all this in terms of life, partly because we shall have to get our biology right before our theology can ever be sound; but chiefly because I want to avoid introducing a theological presupposition about Jesus which makes his experience irrelevant to us, and which therefore destroys the meaning of the Incarnation. In Jesus life rises to a height to which God has proposed that it should rise in us. Is it not written that we are to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ? And does not St. Paul say, too, that we are to know the fellowship of his sufferings, be made conformable to his death and to attain unto the resurrection of the dead? These deep mysteries of transfiguration and agony, of the Cross and the empty grave are in some way to be reproduced in us. This process is the discipline of the ascending life. There is a theory that the evolution of the race recapitulates itself in the growth of every individual; and it is plain in the New Testa-

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ment that the ascent of life as we trace it in Jesus of Nazareth is to recapitulate itself in every living soul. The New Testament is full of this idea. The grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies and brings forth much fruit is an elementary biological parable of this same discipline. St. Paul speaks of dying daily, of bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; and he is crucified with Christ and lives. Popular theology has left the Cross behind in the past, something done once for all; and it has relegated the Resurrection to some unimaginable future, something that is yet to be. But the deepest thought of St. Paul is that the Cross and the Resurrection are to be enacted in every Christian soul and that not only once but all the time. The Cross is no longer on Calvary nor the Risen Lord in Joseph's Garden but in our hearts.

And when we state it in this way, it sounds as though it should be a very eventful, thrilling and exciting affair. There is a mountain which I know well which when you climb it the first time illudes you at least six times into thinking that you are on the point of reaching its summit. But every summit you put your foot on shows you a higher just ahead. And if you are fit, the thing becomes after a bit rather a good joke: the summit ahead beckons you, challenges you to come along: and if you have company you go along hilariously until you have mounted the actual summit. And that has always seemed to me to be a parable of what life should be, a business of conquering heights. But life

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for most of us seems to be a rather flat, monotonous affair along a familiar plain where the landscape hardly varies from day to day. In youth it is perhaps different. Then there is the excitement of experiment, a readiness to try untrodden ways; there is ambition, the thrilling hope of doing great things, of the thing we call success; and any young person who does not feel that this is an extraordinarily interesting world, and that life itself is charged with surprises ought to go and see a doctor. But on that plane you sooner or later reach the doldrums. After all the excitement of trying yourself out against the world, you presently drop into a place that about fits you: and then one day will become much like another. Tomorrow begins where yesterday began. Once, on a journey, I contracted a physical disorder which had the curious effect of dulling my sense of taste: and for four days on which I sailed across the sunny Mediterranean, every meal and every course in every meal had the same insipidity of flavor. And the whole of our life is apt to become like that: a dull pedestrian round in which morning tastes the same as the afternoon and tomorrow has the same flavor as yesterday.

And that comes from living your life outside yourself and not living it within yourself. I do not mean that there is not a part of our life that we have to live outside of ourselves. The great work of the world must be carried on; the framework of life has to be kept in good going order. But that becomes irredeemably dull

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and dispiriting because we forget to live within ourselves as well. Within you there is a life waiting to be lived full of wonder and romance, of grand excitements and inspiring adventure; and a world to be discovered as lifted up above the common orbit of your outward life as the heavens are above the earth. Listen to St. Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"; think of the tremendous hidden drama that is packed into that statement,—the surprises, the turns of the road, the mountain tops, the gardens amid which its scenes are laid. All that transaction went on in one man's soul and nobody saw it but Himself: though the whole world is even to this day feeling its effects. For the glow and the fire of the experience came out in words and in deeds that startled dead souls into life and reproduced themselves in them. Or listen to this other man: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and I saw one like unto a Son of man; and when I saw him I fell at his feet as one dead: and he laid his right hand upon me, saying Fear not, I am the first and the last and the living one: and I was dead and behold I am alive for evermore." What would you not give to live through an experience like that? No, it's away back of your face, back of your eyes that the great resplendent experiences of life are waiting for you, in that inner consciousness that lies deeper than the centers of sense; and into which you may go if you will but draw down the shades that shut out the things of sense and trust

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yourself to that darkness until it dissolves into light. There are the springs of your true life: there lie the Mounts of Transfiguration and the Gethsemanes, the Calvaries and the Joseph's Gardens which make you a living soul and save you from becoming a walking cadaver simulating life.

III

Shall we then say that here we have a law of life? And if so what is its application to us? I want to return to a point that I have made before and to carry it a little further. I tried to show that we transcend our work; that our personality is more important than our projects. It seemed to me (as I said) that Jesus had on the Cross a sense of failure: and in the immediate task as He had envisaged it, He had failed. The people whom He had set his heart on winning repudiated Him and the Kingdom of God. But the final meaning of the Cross lies in this paradox (and all great truths are embodied in paradox), that though the work failed, the worker triumphed: and the triumph of the worker was made the more complete and magnificent, became indeed an absolute thing, because of the miscarriage of the work. Which seems to me to carry with it this truth: that our primary concern is with the life that is in us. That life will express itself in work; but the achievement of the height of life is not bound up with the success or the failure of the work. For beyond any

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specific work that we have to do, beyond any enterprise to which we are called, is the life which we have to transmit through ourselves, enlarged and enriched, to the children of man and even to ages yet unborn.

Please do not think that I mean that our work in the world is unimportant. On the contrary, apart from other considerations, our work is a necessary part of our own discipline and our life is impoverished when we fail to discharge it loyally and honorably. But the failure of our work does not carry with it our failure as men; it may even accentuate our human triumph. And even in the doing of our work the transmission of life to those with whom and for whom we work is much more important than any concrete achievement. Our first responsibility is to be bearers and quickeners of life. Jesus sought to win his people into the Kingdom to become its torchbearers among the Gentiles; and while He was doing and in doing this public work, He was quickening his own quality of life in Peter and James and John and Mary and Martha and Mary Magdalene: so that even in the moment when his public work was undone, at the foot of the Cross there was a little group ready to God's hands to receive a new baptism of life and to become the new Israel to take to mankind the vision and the message that the old Israel had rejected. Jesus had brooded over the word of God to the prophets, had searched his own heart to its depths, and had supposed that his own rescued and redeemed people would become the channel of this new

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life to the world; and for that He lived: and in the ups and downs of that travail, through darkness and light, his own life was calling out the true Israel, the remnant, the channel which God had designed: while within Him that life was ascending by stepping-stones of frustration and vision, of despair and hope and failure to that power and height which makes it to this hour shine forth as the sun out of that mangled body on the Cross. And whatever else might die, that life could not die.

IV

The personal end of this discussion is: That we achieve personality, that we teach immortality and invincibility of life by the same road as Jesus: by the steady loyal nurture and practice of faith and love. I might, had I the time, show you how faith and love are the final terms of the two great principles which have governed the evolution of life from its first minute beginnings: but that must wait. What is pertinent to us just now is that the height of life is reached by the perfecting of faith and the perfecting of love: by the perfecting of our union with God and the perfecting of our union with man. And in this there is a sort of dual surrender, a double denial of self, a twofold death. There was on the Cross a death deeper than death, an utter self-giving to God and to man at the same time, a complete self-obliteration, a perfect self-effacement; but by a divine and eternal paradox, that death deeper

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than death was life transcending life. And in the practice of faith and in the exercise of love, we too must die daily; we too must lay our selfhood upon the altars of God and Man; and to lie dead and consumed upon those altars is to rise in newness of life. We bear about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. We are crucified with Christ and so we live; yet not we, but Christ liveth in us.

You will say that this is a counsel of perfection: that we whose faith is so little, whose love is so feeble have no chance of rising to those heights of experience and power. But faith and love, however faint, grow and are perfected by practice: and the discipline of faith is

“Simply trusting every day,
Trusting through a stormy way,
Trusting him what e’er befall,—”

facing life in self-forgetfulness, and remembering God all the time, and scorning the consequences; and the discipline of love is like unto it: simply loving every day, willing to love the unlovely, and them who do not want our love and despise us and it, and refusing to decline unto cynicism and misanthropy. And you do not know to what height a resolute active will to faith and an unyielding will to love may bring you; nor by what road. You will encounter frustration; but there is transfiguration ahead. You may be driven into Gethsemane; but the agony is transmuted into power and

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peace. You may see your love repudiated by your beloved, and your dearest hope dead; and you may hang in anguish on your cross, while the life that is in you is still mounting to a transcendental height and potency. While yet darkness covers your world, that life-beyond-life overcomes the sharpness of death and issues forth from its grave resplendent and glorious. And it flows on in you and beyond you a fructifying, fertilizing river, at which the thirsty may drink, where dead souls may bathe and live; growing deeper and broader with the years until at last its course is ended and it loses itself in that ocean of life which is God Himself.

Pilate and Caiaphas thought they had choked the channel: but unwittingly they had built a dam: and behind that dam the arrested waters gathered and rose. But the dam has never yet been built that can hold back for long the tide of life. And on the morning of the third day the dam cracked and the life poured through. There ready laid in Peter and James and John and the three Marys and the rest of the little company of disciples was the new channel of God's designing in which the river of life was to flow, and to flow broadening and deepening through the ages to come. Like a river that takes its rise in some hidden and trackless wilderness out of sight, and then suddenly appears and opens out, a thing of majesty and power, before the eyes of men, passing through their common haunts, irrigating their fields and making them fruitful, so on a momentous day seven weeks later this river of life issued out of its

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obscurity, a thing of wonder and strength, and took its course through the common ways of mankind, cleansing, fertilizing, redeeming, broadening with the years. And it is that same river that has reached us in the distant land and the distant age and is flowing through us here this day. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

V

THE UPPER ROOM

V

THE UPPER ROOM

THOSE of us who live and work for the hope of the Kingdom of God frequently bewail our lack of power, by which we seem to mean a deficit of executive force, some incompetency in ourselves to make our dreams come true and to produce those spiritual and moral effects upon individuals and upon society that we should desire to see. But we fall into great error if we suppose that the power we need is something that can be superimposed upon life, a sort of magical auxiliary engine that multiplies our natural momentum. The only power that we have any business with is that which comes from increase of life, from the enhancement of personality. Power is only a by-product; our fundamental need is for more life and fuller: and having that, we have all things else.

I shall have very greatly failed if in these addresses I have not persuaded you that our chief business in life is life itself: and that our first concern should be with the means by which we may rise to the height of life. I have tried to state a doctrine of the significance of work in relation to life. Normally we are all overcon-

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cerned about the results of our work, the visible outward success or failure of it. I do not think that that is the important thing. What is important is that, in doing our work, the life that is in us should be growing from more to more and quickening itself in those with whom we have to do. Jesus, as I have repeatedly said, had set Himself the task of winning his own people into the Kingdom of God, so that they might become its heralds to mankind; but in that immediate specific purpose He failed. But while He was yet leading this forlorn hope, the greater and deeper purpose of God was going forward out of sight. And I think that the significance of the Fourth Gospel is that it takes us down to this deeper level and shows us beneath the crust of outward event the greater business that was afoot. For in that Gospel, we see Jesus quickening life in dead and diseased souls; and those wayside operations that seem in the other gospels to be incidental to his immediate public purpose are shown to be the real business of his ministry. He was laying the foundations of the future by quickening a new quality of life in ordinary men and women: and all the time the life that was in Him was rising, in the face of opposition and disappointment, to that transcendent double triumph of uncompromised faith and unsundered love in which we saw that the abiding splendor of the Cross lies. The work that we have to do in the world, whatever it may be, is the road along which we travel; it does not matter whether we reach the goal that we have set before us; what matters is what is go-

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ing on within us as we make a journey; that we should so carry ourselves on the road that the life that is in us should be growing finer, richer, more luminous, and that it should be communicating itself to our fellow travelers. Our work is not the end of our life; it is its occasion and its opportunity; and that is our chief business not that we should accomplish this or the other thing, but that we should become radiative with life.

You will perhaps remember that I said the personality stands between God and Man, bound to God by faith and bound to Man by love; and that it reaches its height as it did in Jesus in the exercise of a faith that will not let go of God and of a love that will not let go of Man, and that despite all the disappointments and assaults to which faith and love are exposed. This is only another way of saying that life, like the lamp which was fed from two olive trees in Zechariah's vision of the Temple, has two springs. One of these springs is the life of our fellows round about us, and the other the personal infinite spring of life in God. The organ by which it absorbs nourishment from the life round about us is love; and that by which it replenishes itself from the life of God is faith. It would be an easy task to show how sedulously Jesus repaired to these springs; and it was just because He did so that the tides of life in Him rose to their invincible height on Calvary and overflowed into the life of his followers.

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I

It is now our business to consider the further fortunes of this life in that little company of men and women whose souls it has invaded. The first thing is to observe how instinctively that life in them turned to its natural spring.

Faith and love have their own characteristic expressions. Faith exercises itself in prayer and love expresses itself in fellowship; and it was to prayer and fellowship that the disciples turned when they were left alone in the world. The two words prayer and fellowship tell the whole essential story of the Upper Room.

Now faith is a word which covers a whole continent of spiritual experience. It is, for instance, a way of looking at life; I have sometimes defined it as the will to face life on the assumption that God is love. In that sense, it is a disposition and an attitude; and it expresses itself in characteristic word and deed toward God and Man in the ordinary way of life. It is the source and the determining factor of our reactions and responses to our various contacts and conflicts with the world. But just because it is the living God who is its object, it is an attitude which refuses to accept any issue or event as a last word. Because it is faith in God, it is faith in the future; and it exists in a habit of expectancy. It is the spirit of discovery, of exploration; it acknowledges no frontier to experience or to

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knowledge. It is one of its first principles that God has more light and truth to break forth from his holy word; it assumes that mountains can be moved and sycamine trees uprooted. It is the God-ward thrust of life. Consequently it never rests on its oars; and when it becomes encrusted and stationary, it ceases to be itself. As long as it lives, it never ceases to expect visions and revelations of the Lord; and what is more, it gets them.

Mr. Micawber, you will remember, was always waiting for something to turn up; and faith is like that. But unlike Mr. Micawber it does something more than wait. It tries to make this "something" turn up. It is not content to wait for an apocalypse; it endeavors to pull the apocalypse down on its head. If it hopes for a visitation of God, it also prepares the way of the Lord. It has its own characteristic activity by which it looks into the dark and listens in into the silence; and that is prayer. Need I remind you how much Jesus had to say about prayer and how much He prayed, how He went out into desert places to pray and how once at least He spent the whole night in prayer? The little company in the Upper Room in its turn went to its knees as simply and as naturally as it sat at meat. It was as spontaneous a thing as breathing. Just what their prayer was to bring them they did not know; they had been told of the promise of the Father and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them; but they had no means of knowing what these words connoted. But

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whatever it was, it was, for them to lie in wait for it, to prepare its way, to keep the mystic highway open,—and so they prayed. And they continued in prayer, says the record; Continued in prayer until the great thing befell them that they had been bidden to expect.

There is perhaps no danger to which life is exposed so great as that of “settling down” to become content with a certain range and quality of experience and to sink into rut; to grow tired of the climb and to build its tabernacle on an easy foothill. And there are some who illude themselves into the idea that they have reached the final term of experience and understanding in the deep things of God. Life, they think, has no surprises for them; they know it all; like the Abbé Siéyès at the French Revolution, who claimed he had exhausted the science of politics, they think that there is no more of life than that they have known. But does not St. Paul say something about being filled unto all the fullness of God? No, no living soul need outlive the joy of expectancy. There are heights beyond heights of life awaiting us, if simply and humbly and patiently we aspire to them. There are revelations and apocalypses and great lifts of life waiting for those who will put and keep themselves in the way of them. When I was a lad, it used to be one of my delights to go down to the banks of the Dee a few miles below the city of Chester about the time of high tide; for the tide used to come up the river in a “bore.” And the folk living thereabout if they wanted to go up to the city would

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push their boats into mid-stream to wait until the flood reached them and lifted them on its crest and carried them where they wanted to go. And there are flood-tides of life that come to us and lift us up upon their crest, enhancing and reinforcing the life that is in us; but we have to push our little boats into mid-stream to be ready for their coming. And that is no difficult matter. You need neither word nor gesture; only a mind turned purposefully God-ward and sending out some hailing thought, some longing into the unseen, and to keep on doing it. That is all; that is all they did in the Upper Room; and at length the flood-tide came; and that was Pentecost.

II

But this is only one side of the process. For there are other reinforcements that swell the tide. There is the confluent river of love with all the treasure that it too carries. We have yet to learn how much more love brings to us than it takes away from us; and how much worth while it is for us to love folks for our own sakes. There are, of course, degrees of love; but there is no circumference drawn for it that defines its outer limit. It is strongest near the center, and it shades away through a number of concentric circles, both local and moral; and no man dare define its utmost reach. It is indeed the characteristic demand of Christianity that it shall have no limit; it is to cast its spacious mantle

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over friends and enemies, over those who are near and those who are afar off. But its fires must be fed upon its own hearth: and love is fed by having fellowship. We know indeed how much our fellowship adds to the strength of our life. It brings us balance and wholeness of judgment; knowledge and understanding; and certain intensifications of experience which are the salt of life. We have good reason to know how valuable can be the fun and good fellowship of the easy camaraderie of an idle hour; and that is merely on the surface of life. But when we reach the deeper levels of fellowship in a common purpose or a common hope, then more goes on than we are aware of for the moment. Fellowship becomes a hidden commerce, a mystic marketplace where we barter life for life in a communion of love, a transfusion of spirit by which life is fertilized and multiplied. And the more momentous the concerns of our fellowship, the more deep-running and vital does it become; the more intimately do we grow into each other. There is little that adds so much to the fullness of life as the memory and the experience of great things done together, seen together, suffered together. We become each other's stepping-stones to the high places of life.

There comes, however, a moment when the river of faith and the river of love meet; and their confluence becomes an irresistible tide. It was the tide that carried Jesus to the crowning glory of the Cross and to his triumph after death. All that comes to us from our

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communion with God and our fellowship with man becomes a single irresistible thrust. And that was what happened in the Upper Room. There was prayer and fellowship, faith and love fused into each other; and the prayer created a new power of fellowship, and the fellowship created a new power of prayer. And out of that fusion came the power and pressure of life that broke down all barriers of fear and hesitation and swept away hostility and prejudice; and the quickening cleansing river of life started out on its course through the common ways of men.

III

So, you see, there is no new prescription for Christian impotency; no novel short-cut to power. The way of Jesus, the way of the Upper Room is still the only way of life and more life. The discipline of faith in prayer, the discipline of love in fellowship, simply and patiently accepted and exercised, than this there is no other way to the one power which matters. It is not power to get things done that we need so much as an increase of life in ourselves, and as we acquire that we shall gather in our stride all the power we can ever use. We are too much busied with efficiency and getting things done and machinery and organization; and all these things are very right in their own places. But our preoccupation with these things is itself a symptom of the deficit of life in ourselves. And what in the end is

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the good of any of them if we are short of the life which gives them their only meaning? What is the use of making a river-bed if there is no water to flow in it? What is the use of building engines if we do not provide that there shall be steam to drive them? What is the profit of creating new wine-skins if we have no new wine to put into them? Let us look to the life; and the rest will be added unto us.

But we shall have to make a business of seeking this increase of life if we are to find it. It is not enough to wait for it to turn up. We shall have to go out of our way to secure it; to forsake trodden ways that have lost their vitality and resiliency; and to learn anew the practice of faith and love in prayer and fellowship; and we shall have to do it purposefully and intensively. We shall have to discover how to bring the spirit of Jesus with us to some Upper Room. It is a commonplace that all the great forward strides of life have been made by small companies that did this very thing and who kept doing it until the floods descended. And we in our turn will have to come together into like companies in prayer and fellowship, not to assail God with an extemporary salad of unpremeditated petitions but rather to listen and to wait. The prayer meeting is dead because we have talked it to death, being unable or unwilling to keep silence before God: and if it is to be raised from the dead, we must make up our minds to come there and keep silence unless and until the spirit of God puts us under an irresistible constraint to speak.

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We moderns do not know how to be quiet before God and to wait for his Word. We become uneasy, restless, nervous and strained unless someone is speaking. And we shall have to get over that folly if we are to recover this lost grace of fellowship in prayer and of prayer in fellowship. For after all God is not dumb that we should be forever speaking; He is not deaf that we have to storm Him with words: nor is He supine that He should need our eloquence to move Him. He wants only our concerted preparedness; He wants only an upper room with spirits awaiting the coming of his Spirit. He wants only a handful of folk who will continue with one accord in prayer and will not desist until the floodgates are opened.

Is there among us such a handful, who will lay co-operative siege to the unseen, who will form a joint stock enterprise in search of this ascending life?